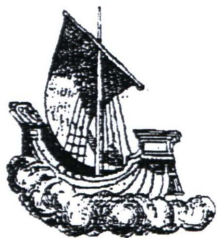


Magonia 55

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March 1996

Interpreting Contemporary Vision and Belief



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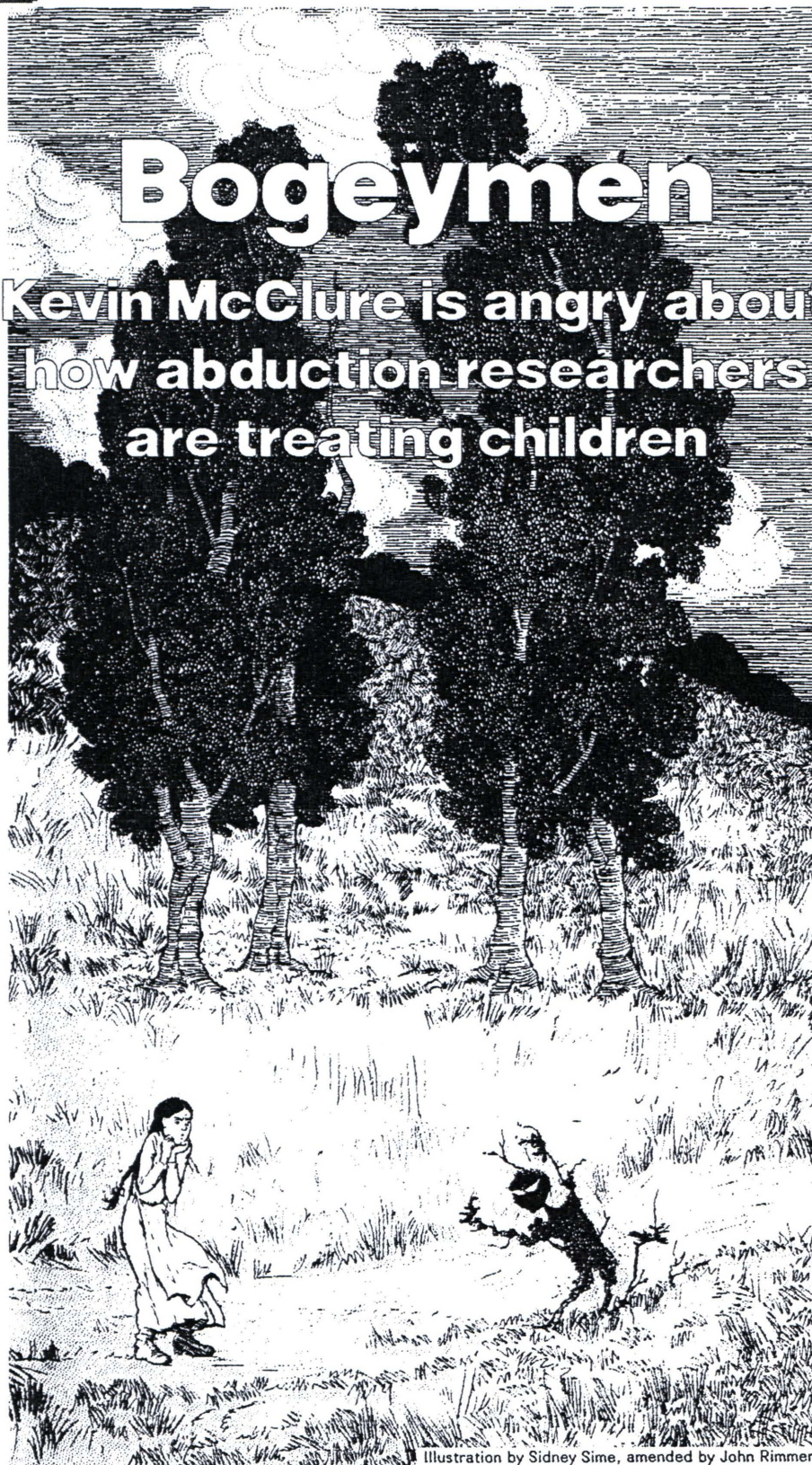


Illustration by Sidney Sime, amended by John Rimmer



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IT IS with great sadness that I have to tell our readers of the death of Roger Sandell. Roger died on January 20th at Roehampton Hospital in London, after an unsuccessful operation for cancer. He was 51.

Besides the tremendous personal loss which all of us at *Magonia* feel, and I am sure all who knew him will share, there is a great loss to everyone who studies the subjects we cover in *Magonia*.

Roger's primary interest was history, and his deep knowledge and understanding of the past illuminated everything he said, wrote and believed. His interest in fortana and ufology started through his historical research into accounts of Spring-Heel Jack and the turn of the century airship scares. He looked at these not as isolated 'phenomena' to be picked over by believers and debunkers, but placed them firmly into their historical and social context - of popular fears of crime or invasion, and of the manipulation of those fears by media or politicians. He brought this keen historical understanding to his examination of more contemporary issues, most notably in his analysis of the contemporary Satanic panic. He could see the historical perspective - the connections with the sixteenth century witch-hunts - and link it to contemporary social issues - the growth of religious fundamentalism in America, or the perceived growth of an 'underclass' in Britain.

Before going into hospital, he was about to start work on a study of the links between political extremism in the USA, the militia movement, and the increasingly paranoid, conspiracy-oriented world of the fringes of the UFO community. It is hard to see who now, in Britain at least, is qualified to undertake this work.

It was his interest in being able to construct a rational view of history which, I think, led to his deep interest in the Kennedy assassination. Here he was able to pick his way through the dense jungle of conspiracy theorising and present a sane and plausible view not just of the event itself, but of the world in which such an event could occur.

Anyone who ever met Roger was

impressed and fascinated by the depth and breadth of his knowledge and his photographic memory. He would illustrate a point with a quotation from a book he had read years before, which you could guarantee was word perfect. For relaxation he would compile and conduct quizzes in pubs around Richmond, which provided an educative as well as a convivial evening.

Roger was by profession a teacher. Although I knew little of his working life, he seemed to be able to combine the best of so-called progressive and traditional teaching methods, mainly I think because he refused to acknowledge such labels, and simply managed to communicate his own love of learning to the children in his care.

There are other aspects of Roger's life I had little to do with - his informed interest in the cinema, and his political activities. Some of his political views I agreed with, others I strongly disagreed with, yet any argument with him, however intense, was always conducted rationally and with good humour - on his part at least!

I have known Roger now for over twenty years. From occasional meetings when one or the other of us would be visiting London, to becoming regular collaborators in the production of MUFOB and *Magonia* to a friendship which has inspired me in everything I have been able to do as editor of this magazine.

Lest all this makes Roger sound too serious a character, I remember also his humour and humanity. Our friendship grew in the conviviality of pubs; *Magonia*, notoriously, is edited across pints of real ale. No matter what the topic, at some stage we would end up swapping jokes and laughing uproariously at the comedy inherent in the phenomena we discussed. I also have memories of Saturday afternoon walks with Roger and John Harney, around obscure parts of London or neighbouring towns, visiting pubs, looking at historical sites and buildings, and above all talking, talking, talking, and always learning something from Roger's lightly borne erudition.

We will miss him greatly.

Kevin McClure

This article is a pretty angry assessment of the potential damage arising from what I regard as the myth of alien abduction.

In it I quote substantially from the published works of four named researchers, including interviews with two of them. These four are David Jacobs, Budd Hopkins, John Mack and Jenny Randles, probably the most influential writers and researchers in the field at present.

It is because of their importance that I have chosen to quote from their work, but there are plenty of others to whom my comments could be addressed

Bogeymen



I would like, at the outset, to set Jenny Randles a little apart from the others. She has held out with great determination against the general use of regression hypnosis in investigation, and does, using the term 'spacenapping', present a less absolute version of abduction that do most of the American writers. However, all seem to have gone beyond the simple witness/researcher relationship, in which two aware adults agree to deal with accounts of events that may or may not be real. All have commented on, and asserted, the role of children in the increasingly weird and perverse world of alien abductions. It is those assertion, and their effects, on which I want to comment.

I guess it was the trial of Rosemary West that really focussed my attention. As well as the series of horrific murders of waifs, strays, hitch-hikers, runaways and lodgers which the trial itself was really about, there gradually emerged the background of a family of young children, trapped from birth in a house with parents obsessed with sex, torture and abuse. While the murder victims mostly came only briefly into the lives of the Wests, and mostly died soon afterwards, the children were there all of their lives till they were either murdered themselves, became old enough to run away, or eventually the police intervened and they were taken into care.

For those children life was a ceaseless round of oppression and abuse. There was no escape, no-one they could talk to about it, nobody who could tell them how most families function, what parental love should really be. It seems that they came to accept that the sick exploitation their parents practiced on them was what was normal; from the "Mummy loves you, this is for your own good" line for the vicious beatings she gave, to the "Daddy does it best" excuse for the sexual assaults he inflicted on them.

It's hardly possible to imagine how children can feel living with the knowledge that they are going to be persistently abused, exploited and hurt. And how much worse they might feel if those they trust tell them that there can be no escape from their suffering, that their destiny is to be controlled, taken in every sense against

their will. The Wests put microphones in every room, barred the doors, and followed the children round outside the home. They breached every element of trust that should exist between parent and child.

Presumably there are few of you out there who don't find what the Wests did to their children utterly repulsive. You probably think it incomprehensible, sick, twisted. You felt anger towards the Wests, pity and sorrow for their children. Had you, personally, been given the opportunity to save any one of these children from the hell they went through, would you not have done your best for them, stopped what was happening, prevented it ever happening again?

I think you would. Despite the media circus that recounts every last detail of this and many other cases, and the publishers who fight to put on record as much gore as will secure them a quick and grisly profit, most of us, as individuals, still care. Which is why I'd like you to follow the train of thought along which I was led by the West trial, and some other recent research.

Let's start with a few quotes. You may find some parallels with the West case, and the way they treated their children. Here we have four major commentators on the abduction issue writing and talking about the abduction and abuse of children. Abduction by alien beings, abuse that they suggest takes place on a physical level, causing physical effects and psychological trauma...

The basic reproductive procedures that occur during an abduction experience can fundamentally influence the psychosexual development of the individual. This is especially true for young abductees who are most vulnerable and impressionable. (Jacobs, 1994)

Susan recalls that after the age of fourteen her space-nappings became more overtly sexual in nature. The entities extracted fluids and began to examine and the 'mess about' with her ovaries. (Randles, 1994)

During the first regression, in the course of talking about her abduction at seven years old, Jerry indicated that she had had earlier encounters. She could not recall how old she was, but remembers being small... A still more disturbing episode, which we explored in detail in the second hypnosis session, occurred in Georgia when Jerry was thirteen. She woke up terrified and remembered pressure in the abdomen and genital area that she could not move. 'In my head I was screaming', Jerry remembers. (Mack, 1995)

Christie describes the figures as being thin, gray-skinned and hairless. The most traumatic moments came when she recalled a needle piercing her lower abdomen in the region of her left ovary, while a second slender needle entered her vagina. (Her account closely parallels that of a Minnesota woman who, under hypnosis, described these same operations taking place during a UFO abduction which occurred when she was five years old)... There are many more details to Christie's account, but I feel we now know why she thought she might have been sexually molested as a child, why she had an aversion to visiting her doctor for an injection and why she was always afraid of the area near the water tower. Two more hypnotic sessions have disclosed a second abduction - the source of the scar on her leg - and a most disturbing teenage encounter... (Hopkins, 1987)

These accounts are not written in terms of investigations or characterised as speculation based on interviews with the individuals. Almost all are written assertively, as if alien abduction and abuse is objective, established fact. As if these are real incidents in the lives of individuals, people we know or could meet. Some accounts include material so gross it should be published only in a scientific or medical journal, where proper control and peer assessment is exercised. The short extract from

Budd Hopkins (4, above) is slight compared to some of then accounts, particularly those written by David Jacobs in the 'Psychosexual Dysfunction' section of (2), and elsewhere. Some of these accounts, if separated from the context of a purported real event, could be mistaken for paedophile fantasies of sexual torture, and regardless of whether or not these accounts have any basis in reality, it is clear that a number of publishers and magazine editors think there is nothing wrong in publishing detailed accounts of violent sexual assaults on children.

It doesn't stop at accounts. A context is described, conveying a clear message that there is both an overall plan to be fulfilled, and that individuals are chosen to be repeatedly abducted and abused. And that there is no way for those victims to avoid their fate:

The evidence indicates that, with the exception of opportunistic abductions, all abductees have their first experience in childhood. The youngest case I have found was that of an abductee who found her eight month old child being taken,

Those they trust tell them
that there can be no escape
from their suffering, that
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controlled, taken in every
sense against their will

although most abductees remember their first episode occurring when they were between the ages of four and seven. The aliens then in some way 'tag' the person and mentally and physically 'mine' him or her for a good part of their lives. I have no record of a series of abductions that begin when the abductee is an adult. (Jacobs, 1994)

Resistance to the alien's procedures occurs infrequently because most abductees are so closely controlled, both physically and mentally... (Jacobs, 1994)

...the human alien relationship itself evolves into a powerful bond. despite their resentment and terrorisation, the abductees may feel deep love toward the alien beings... The leader may be seen as a familiar, loving and wide figure, known by the experiencer since childhood and ultimately, forgiven for the change from playfulness to a more serious or grim purpose that occurs in the abductions when puberty is reached and the hybrid-creating process begins. (Mack, 1995)

This is a programme that has a beginning, a middle and an end. Our best guess is that we are in the end-point of the programme, and that the end-point will be relatively soon, perhaps as little as the next twenty years

(Jacobs, 1994).
David M. Jacobs.
Alien Encounters,
Virgin, 1994.
Previously
published as
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Jenny Randles.
Star Children, Hale,
1994

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E. Maok. *Abduction
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Encounters with
Aliens*. Pocket
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1987

(Jacobs, 1995).
David Jacobs,
*Interview In UFO
Magazine*, Nov/Dec
1995



I am pessimistic. The more I learn about this phenomenon, the more I have to reign myself back from falling into despair. I have to think, "Well. I don't know, I really can't tell. Maybe it's not going to be the way I envisage it to be." But the evidence inexorably leads to a pessimistic view of the future. I fear for the future. And I fear for my children."

Q. What can we do about it?

A. Absolutely nothing. The aliens have an incredibly advanced technology. They can do what they want to do. (Jacobs, 1995)

Nor, apparently, does the individual abductee have only himself or herself to worry about. Quite apart from the hybrid children we are assured so many of them will bear, or father, their own children or grandchildren are apparently at risk:

In the beginning it was a random selection, a global encompassment but a small random selection. People who were Jewish or gentile, black and white, Hispanic or Asian, indeed all ethnic groups, who had nothing particularly in common physiologically or mentally, were chosen at random around the world.

It is my belief that every
account of medical
examinations and
interbreeding is absolute
fiction.

And that includes all the
stories of violent abuse of
children by aliens

This immediately becomes an inter-generational phenomenon: the children of these abductions would also be abductees. It is no longer random in terms of selection. (Jacobs, 1995)

Abductions run in families, sometimes over three or more generations. (Mack, 1995)

There is one key issue that we need to deal with. Simply, should any of this material ever reach a mass audience, likely to include children among a range of other vulnerable groups? In dealing with that issue we need, if only briefly, to ask if there is any physical, objective reality pertaining to any of these accounts? Full of horror and detail and pain as they are, and possibly able to cause the experiencers to display some symptoms of post-traumatic stress, do they have any reality outside of the minds of the individuals who supply them? Is there any physical evidence whatever to specifically support the contention that alien abductions occur? Have the earlier claims that such physical evidence was, or would be, available ever been fulfilled.

Before answering that question, I'd like to stress

that I'm not accusing anyone of fabricating any abduction account deliberately or knowingly, for any reason. This is partly because the law of libel can be used to support ludicrous assertions, but mostly because I cannot get to grips with the minds and perceptions of those researchers - as named in this article, among many others - who assert that there is any physically real element in any of these events. In that I cannot comprehend how they reach their conclusions, I would be stupid to guess at their motivation for doing so. Sadly, the frightening likelihood seems to be that they are entirely sincere in what they do, say and believe, and that will consider me utterly mistaken.

However, my own position is unequivocal. I do not believe that any human being, at any time, has ever been taken away, abducted or whatever by any non-human entity. I am quite sure that there are no medical examinations, no interbreeding, no presentation of babies. Consequently, it is my belief that every account of such an event is, however that account comes to be given, an absolute fiction. And that includes all the stories of violent abuse of children by aliens.

I've come to this conclusion for the very simple reason that there is no evidence to support any other. We were told there were implants: there is no tangible evidence of implants. We were told there were cup and scoop marks, caused by aliens. There are few marks of any kind, and nothing to suggest they were made by aliens. We were told there would be medical evidence of missing pregnancies: there is none. We are told that abductees see spouses and siblings fast asleep while their abductions take place: that tells me the experiences have no physical reality.

What the abduction proponents now rely on in 'corroboration'. Supposedly, there are key elements of the abduction experience about which the general public cannot know, because the researcher/writers have kept them secret, as a test, like the police sometimes do to deter those who falsely claim to be murderers or whatever. This contention is hard to argue with, because of course if it's a secret I don't know what it is! However, there are no so many therapists, support groups, buddies and the rest involved in the active encouragement and sharing of all the complexities of abduction experiences - and so much published and broadcast material - that I very much doubt if there is any remaining element that could fulfil the conditions necessary to make corroboration a valid argument for the reality of abductions. The range of content of abduction experience has grown exponentially in the past few years, particularly in the direction of prequels - recounting experiences 'remembered' from earlier and earlier in life - and in the matter of interbreeding, hybrid child presentation, nurture and so on. These elements have been given vast publicity in all areas of the media. I don't believe that there are any secrets. So long as someone is listening, I guess that the story just keeps on growing.

Where I *would* criticise the abduction researchers, named and unnamed, is in their apparent failure to look for parallels to the accounts they are so determinedly collecting. Apparently they've found that there is a beginning and end to the abduction business: beginning 1897, or 1940, or something, and ending - well, sometime in these researchers' lifetimes. There's a surprise. Having set these limits, they express amazement at the stories people come up with, and the fact



that they report they've had remarkable, apparently supernatural experiences. While the interpretations put on the Roper Poll date were absurd, don't ignore the raw data. people really do believe that all these things happen to them.

But then they always have. However closely you may study the history of ufology, if you don't look beyond it to the *other* ways people deal with the experiences, feelings, fears and hopes that they don't understand, and the ways they *have* dealt with them in the past, you'll never have a hope of understanding the people you're attempting to deal with. My own field is, perhaps, claims of extraordinary experience within religions. How do the abduction researchers regard the thousands of apparently intelligent people claiming physical interaction with physical angels? Or of the countless thousands more sensible, educated, middle-class people currently involved in the 'Toronto Blessing' movement? They believe that, if they attend meetings at certain locations, and open their minds in prayer and devotion, that the Holy Spirit will come to them personally, and cause dramatic changes in their immediate behaviour and overall lifestyle. It's sometimes called a 'refreshing', but it looks for all the world like the 'transformation' of John Mack or the New Age Movement.

You can see the same desires and emotions at work in the Welsh Revival of 1904, and many others before it. You can find instances of paralysis of the body while the spirit meets and converses with the divine in European Christian mysticism of the early Middle Ages. If you want a remarkable example of the development of 'prequels' and repeated encounter experiences, look at the way that the surviving Fatima witness reinvented what was said and done in 1917, adding visions before and after the reported events. You want to see how a smallish, shapeless form turns into an intricately dressed, adult religious icon? Look at the role of St Bernadette's aunt in the development of the vision of Lourdes. People have experiences, then they look for ways to deal with them. But those experiences can be shaped - and presented in remarkable ways.

As an aside, a word about the role of the sceptics. In the context of the potential psychological damage - and maybe worse - that the abduction myth threatens to children and others, the efforts of the sceptics and natural scientists are, at this stage, a waste of time, a nuisance, an irrelevance and an obstacle to dealing with the real issues. This is not about electricity and temporal lobes, it is even less about mirages of planets. This is about the well-being of thousands of vulnerable individual human beings. And what they believe in, about experiences they believe they have had, and the ways in which they are led to interpret those beliefs and experiences.

I've admitted to failing to understand how researchers come to conclude that abductions have a physical reality. I also fail to understand why we continue to condone their activities. With, again, the notable exception of Jenny Randles, all sorts of methods are used to induce levels of consciousness in which the providers of the accounts are *less* than fully conscious, and more than usually suggestible. But it's not as though the of other techniques of encouragement:

For the other abductees, however, the effects of abductions can be terribly traumatic and destructive. Once these victims bring the memories to consciousness through hypnosis or

unaided recall, and once they understand what has happened to them, they find little positive in the events. The experience does not improve their lives, give them mystical powers, or put them in touch with Universal truth. They wish their abductions had never happened and are fearful that they will occur again. Their problems are compounded because few people will believe them when they confide their stories to them. They can produce no hard evidence to prove their contentions. (Jacobs, 1994)

Sometimes there is a moment of shock and sadness when the abductee discovers in the initial interview or during a hypnosis session, that what they had more comfortably held to be a dream was actually some sort of bizarre, threatening and vivid experience which they may then recall has occurred repeatedly and for which they have no explanation. (Mack, 1995)

Abductees desperately want the abduction experience to stop (Jacobs, 1994)

In spite of comments of this kind, none of the researchers seem to have wondered whether, if a person doesn't have a full recollection of a traumatic memory, there may well be a good reason for that. *Not* assisting recall, *not* hypnotising or regressing, might well be the best thing to do for the expert, the course of action that is therapeutically correct. The human memory can be merciful, and for good reasons. However, neither this consideration, nor the fact that he holds a responsible position at a university, has prevented John Mack from taking the abduction experience as *he* sees it out to the little one:

One savvy eight-year-old abductee looked at me incredulously when I asked him if he told his friends about his 'encounters', which he was able to distinguish sharply from dreams, even when they had to do with UFOs (Mack, 1995)

On November 8, I met with Colin, now two years and nine months old, and his parents in my home while his brother and sister played in the yard. He impressed me as a sweet, lively boy, but he revealed few of his fears... I went through the HIRT cards with him, and he reacted strongly only to the alien card, which he called a "scary man", and became more anxious after this. (Mack, 1995)

Are there any other parents out there who can imagine how we'd respond to an approach of this kind to one of our children? I'd be interested to know if any other researchers have been out making children "more anxious". Maybe we can do something about them.

A clear and not too distant echo of the relationship between the West children and their parents can be found in *Alien Encounters*. This is a statement by the author, presumably summarising his research, and making a statement of his understanding of the subject:

The problems are made incalculably worse by the bonding and sexual-arousal procedures performed on all abductees. When the alien performs bonding on a young child who is lying naked on a table, the rush of pleasurable emotions in her is irresistible. She is completely defenceless. This is even more injurious when the Taller Being ('male' or 'female') elicits intense sexual arousal feelings, and even orgasm. Then, while bonding and/or sexual feelings are at a peak, the Being begins the gynaecological or urological procedures and physically intrudes into her genitals or mechanically extracts his sperm. (Jacobs, 1994)

For John Mack, who somehow manages to see hope and choice in the ruthless exploitation he reports as occurring

...despite the cold and businesslike way the abductions themselves are conducted,,, The aliens may be perceived as true family, having protected the experiencers from human depredations, disease and loss. (Mack, 1995)



Yes. Mummy *does* love you. Daddy *does* do it best.

I can't quite imagine why these people want to publish these sordid accounts of abuse. What may, years ago, have started out as reasonably objective, balanced research has turned into something rather peculiar. There is no scientific method in these investigations. There is no peer review (Mack's view of the purpose and effect of the abduction process is almost diametrically opposed to that attributed to Hopkins and Jacobs, but no-one seems to care, or hardly to have noticed).

There is no undertaking to seek independent corroboration of events that should, by their claimed time and place of occurrence, be amenable to such corroboration. Most of those who strongly promote the availability of this material are not trained or qualified in any conventional sense. Qualifications aren't everything, but dealing with children certainly demands particular skills, and coping with sexual abuse, rape, oppression and the resulting trauma and other effects require a range of knowledge and understanding seldom found in the best and most discreet of professionals. The suggestion is made by most abduction researchers that they are either conducting or facilitating therapy. How are these sordid accounts therapeutic? There is no more evidence for that contention than for the abductions themselves.

If what the researchers are saying was true, then many adults and children would be destined without choice or escape, to a life filled with the horror of abduction and abuse. Not only that, but many parents who believed they had been abducted would also have cause to believe that their children grandchildren, and maybe other descendants, too, would be destined to a similar fate. Already, the literature contains accounts of parents who believe their babies and toddlers are being taken.

Maybe if all these parents took the John Mack approach, where the violent abuse of young children can somehow be understood as a positive experience, beneficial to mankind's future, it would be easier for them to cope. But if I were an abductee considering starting a family and believed my child would be put through the forms of torture and assault included, particularly, in the American accounts, then the responsible choice would surely be to remain childless.

And what of the children who read these accounts? For an ordinary stable child, there may be a simple alternative between belief and disbelief, but for those who believe these accounts are true, there is a potential in them for ruining young lives. Jenny Randles gives definitions of 'star children' which include talents and qualities with which a solitary, imaginative, precocious but intelligent child might easily identify. But they are also told that star children are abducted, studied gynaecologically, and have ova taken from them. Other researchers stress the utter helplessness of the abducted child, and graphically describe what has happened to others of their kind. There seem to be no secrets here, held back to ensure 'corroboration'. A child readers of say *Alien Encounters* will have an intricate knowledge of the process she, or less probably he, could expect to face. At least the West children could see their abusers.

For the children of abductees - and judging by the way the numbers have grown, and the typical age and gender of those who volunteer themselves to the researchers, there must be a considerable number - the published and received material must be terrifying. For them the choice to disbelieve is far less accessible. It

means saying your mother is wrong, as well as the 'experts' who write the books, in whom your mother evinces great trust. But the prospects of believing must make them sick, facing the utter inevitability of the role of victim, not only in their lives, but in the lives of their children, too. They will know *what* to expect, they will know it is going to happen, but they'll spend their young lives anxiously waiting to find out when.

So why haven't these books - and many like them, and magazines, videos, TV programmes and more - raised our anger, made us do something about them? Simple answer, I guess. We don't *really* believe in abductions. We don't *really* think that any of this happens. And we can't be bothered to confront those who purvey this material, because they are the key figures in our subject, the ones who sell the books, fill the conferences, give our subject the high profile we would really like it to have. We don't spend our time in ufology to find out that nothing exciting happens at all. Abductions are exciting. never mind if they really happen or not.

Let's try changing this, a little if necessary, a lot for preference. Even it were all true, I am firmly of the opinion that accounts of abuse and torture in a sexual context - not only of children, but of adults too - should not be published as accounts have been so far. Now worthwhile purpose is served by presenting this material to the public, particularly when it has become one of the few contexts in which graphic accounts of child abuse can be included in a 'popular' book. I dread to think what non-ufologist purchasers some of these books might attract. And, of course, if any of it *were* true, if anyone ever *had* been abducted, I wouldn't be the one raising these issues, and assorted enthusiasts from a variety of unrelated backgrounds wouldn't be the ones running the investigations.

In that it is my belief that *none* of it is more than fiction, however it may be produced, I would like to issue a simple, straightforward challenge. To DJ, JM, JR, BH and any other write who looks to sell alien abduction as a physical reality: I believe that the material you are publishing is potentially dangerous. To adults, certainly, but more so to children. We all have a responsibility to be honest with children, and to ensure that they can deal with real life. This material works against that aim.

I believe that apart from the accounts of individuals you are unable to present any physical, tangible evidence which would, on the balance of probabilities, lead reasonable people to conclude that any child, anywhere in the world, has ever

- been abducted by alien, non-human beings to any place, or
 - been experimented upon sexually, or in any other physical manner by any such alien being.
- If you are unable to produce any such evidence for public examination, then I ask that you
- refrain in future from publishing material suggesting that such events occur, and
 - state publicly that you have *no* physical, objective evidence to support the material you have published to date.

It is time to start dealing with the truth, whatever the consequences may be. Compared to the welfare of even one child, the standing and respectability of an obscure branch on anomaly research called ufology is of no importance.

●●●



Jumpers

and the killer monk of Beachy Head



Michael Goss

1. Personal communication (9 September 1995) from Dr Jacqueline Simpson, whom I would like to thank for information and comments on which I have drawn in this article. On the anomaly of why one of these car parks should be so distinguished Dr Simpson has no theory, although she notices that the fact it is opposite the offices of the local paper might influence the choice of someone wishing to exit with a certain amount of publicity.

GO TO THE N19 district of London, ask someone the whereabouts of Suicides' Bridge. Unless that person is a stranger like yourself, the chances are heavily in favour of your being directed there right away. No painful brow-furrowing or other symptoms of urgent memory-searching, no doubt or vagueness; the answer will be with you in an instant.

Everyone in this part of North London seems to know that the metal-railed bridge carrying Hornsey Lane over the A1 between Archway and Highgate is ... *Suicides' Bridge*. Look down from it into the vertically sided chasm below: you have the prospect of a long, straight drop onto a ceaselessly busy road and you will be inclined to agree that anyone who made the jump *would* be committing suicide. If the fall didn't kill them, the traffic surely must... But perhaps you will be told the story I have heard on three occasions (and from three different people) concerning an unsuccessful jumper whom neither fall nor traffic accounted for. He plummeted onto the A1 and *lived*. Lived on a permanent cripple, for he landed on his feet so that his legs were crushed and shortened concertina-fashion by the impact. It may be true, for all I know. More certainly the people who tell the story talk as if it was - and with a sort of macabre pride.

Suicides' Bridge is remarkable chiefly because it is a high place with a sheer drop which an unusually high number of people in and around N19 are alleged to have selected as their point of exit from this world. Asking *why* so many have chosen *this* place and not somewhere else may seem redundant. It shares with other suicide venues dealt with in this article certain features that a suicidal person might regard as practical recommendations. Besides offering the aforementioned sheer drop to near-certain oblivion, it is *accessible*; you can get there easily - just walk onto it and once on you will find little or nothing (and probably nobody) to stop

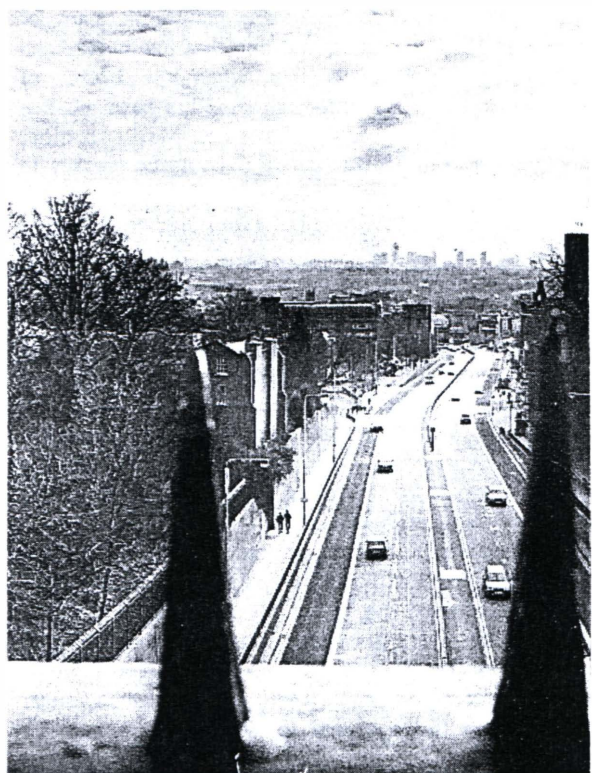
you from jumping off.

And once word gets around that a particular place is associated with an unusually high suicide rate - once this has passed into popular credence and perhaps, as in N19, into popular parlance, so that place will be colloquially known as *Suicide Bridge*, Pool, Leap or whatever - the likelihood is increased that would-be suicides will accept it in exactly these terms. Some will try to make use of its advertised facilities, thereby reinforcing the image. Given time and repetition of events, a species of suggestion might operate to which even persons uncursed by thoughts of self-destruction might succumb. Somebody finding him- or herself at this place might suddenly become oppressed by its associations - might spontaneously and without premeditation jump to their deaths.

Yet apparently it takes more than being in a high place with a sheer drop to endow a place with the nominal, popular title of being a Suicide venue. Dr Jacqueline Simpson, current President of the Folklore Society, tells me that in Worthing there are three very similar multi-storey car parks. *One* of these has been favoured by potential (or actual) suicides, logging by her guess perhaps a dozen over a twenty-year period; the other two, despite being to all intents and appearances just as suitable for that purpose, have no comparable record (either *no* suicides whatsoever, or at most just a few). • I Similarly, I recall that at one time Waterloo Bridge stood out from all competitors spanning the Thames. If you wanted to jump off a London bridge, you went to Waterloo. Again: *why*?

"Why did he do it? He had everything to live for..."

If suicide is an act from which we attempt to distance ourselves - as we do, not always but frequently; if we profess ourselves unable to understand why a particular person killed him- or herself; and if we mutter sadly that the reason is lost in that individual's private self,



Look down from it into the vertically sided chasm below: you have the prospect of a long, straight drop onto a ceaselessly busy road and you will be inclined to agree that anyone who made the jump would be committing suicide

then the mystery is magnified when we see so many people committing suicide, at different times but *in the same place*. What looks in individual cases like a private psychological mystery may now appear a general, *metaphysical* one. So we may begin to speculate that there could be Something about those places that encourages - no, *forces* - folk to commit suicide.

Our forefathers would have understood this. They would have been able to attach a name to the entity who urges humankind to self-destruction; wasn't it known that suicide could only come from the prompting and tempting of the Devil? That certainly declines alongside the decline of belief in a quasi-material Satan. One of the great ironies about Spiritualism's rise in the 19th century was a revivification or refinement of the old belief that suicide was a product of external, disembodied influence, a phenomenon that occurred at the instigation of demonic spirits, savage revenge-bound ghosts and elemental forms which might or might not hold some relationship to the other, more tractable varieties.

I have ... touched on the power of suggestion by Elementals, who, when being the spirits of those who have committed suicide or have been murderers or particularly evil-livers, seek to lure to destruction anyone who comes under their malign influence,

wrote Jessie Adelaide Middleton. ●2 Hers was a personal approach, but not untypical of what many Spiritualists believed. And suppose these murderous spirits, or something like them, haunted certain high and lonely places, mesmerising the susceptible - and perhaps the less susceptible, likewise - into acts of self termination! Wouldn't this explain the way so many suicides seem to "cluster" at particular, notorious locations?

One of the finest exponents of this idea was Elliott O'Donnell (1872-1965), author of more than thirty books of ghost stories. That total, by the way, ignores almost as many pieces of outright fiction and historical studies; it relates purely to what he claimed were *true* ghost stories. A goodly number of these starred a familiar hero, an endangered but undaunted investigator who rolled up his sleeves and took on the most malevolent phantoms imaginable in hand-to-hand combat. This sterling figure was none other than Elliott O'Donnell.

Vengeful, malevolent phantoms were an Elliott O'Donnell speciality and he had a particularly fine line in terrible elemental spirits who haunted pools, streams and crags, luring the unsuspecting to their doom. It is possible that he owed this preoccupation to an episode during his Dublin undergraduate days when, according to *him*, he was throttled by a homicidal phantom (not for the last time, either; O'Donnell seems to have suffered more than most ghost-hunters from spirits with a capacity for GBH). It is still more likely he copped it from the literary trend popularised by William Hope Hodgson in *Carnacki the Ghost-Finder* (1913) or Algernon Blackwood's John Silence, two elementally challenged occultist detectives whom O'Donnell appears to have been determined to act in real life. ●3 There is the chief and obvious difference between O'Donnell and Carnacki or John Silence: he was real, they weren't. His first-person testimonies may have been as fictional as theirs - one hopes! - but they were no less amazing. And there is some magic about O'Donnell's writing that has made people want to take him at face value.

2. Jessie Adelaide Middleton, *The White Ghost Book* (Cassell 1916). The remark is made in context of (or advertisement for) the existence of similar suicide-ghost stories in her other books.

3. Richard Dalby's "Elliott O'Donnell" in *Book and Magazine Collector* 22 (December 1985), pages 38-43, offers an excellent short introduction to the life of the man who was, despite formidable competition from the likes of Harry Price, Britain's best-known ghost-hunter. Best of all, it gives what the writer claims is a complete bibliography of O'Donnell's work - a canon of such vast extent as to deter the hope of ever finding, let alone reading, all of it.

I don't dwell upon Elliott O'Donnell for the pleasure of contemplating his fascinating larger-than-life persona, nor yet for the fun of calling him a wonderful liar, which isn't an appropriate term to use when you are dealing with one who valiantly extended the great tradition of the Victorian First-Person-Attested Ghost Story well past its sell-by date. In my case, it would be crass ingratitude to write of him like that; I can't forget that at the age of fifteen I thought his *Trees of Ghostly Dread* the best book ever written. My motive is that for some time I suspected him to be the originator of a story which typifies the way that recurrent suicides are blamed upon occult influences: the Killer Monk of Beachy Head.

Jutting into the Channel near Eastbourne, Sussex, Beachy Head is a high place and one with a terrible reputation for suicides. The first time I ever saw it - as a child and in the misty distance - my parents solemnly informed me it was "the place people jump off to commit suicide". That conditioned my feelings towards Beachy Head for ever more. It was only a matter of weeks ago when researching this article that I realised that I had never questioned this scenario. That Beachy Head had an unhealthily high suicide rate I didn't and

consistency is hard to establish. He does not appear to figure in any of the great Victorian or Edwardian collections of "true ghost stories" and, as I said before, at one time I suspected him to be another of Elliott O'Donnell's productions, carrying as he does that writer's trademark by being a merciless, malevolent spirit who seeks awful revenge upon the living. The truth is, though, that the only reference to Beachy Head I have found in O'Donnell appears at the start of chapter XXXIII in *Haunted Britain* (Rider, 1948). This doesn't deal with any malevolent monks but (c/o an account published 'some years before the last war' by the *Sunday Chronicle*) with a filmy-white *female* figure seen by four people in the act of precipitating itself from the cliff edge. 'A remarkable feature in many of the Beachy Head tragedies, and one that has never been satisfactorily explained, is that when the bodies of suicides have been found, the left shoe has been missing,' concludes O'Donnell. As far as I am aware, no other investigator picked up that detail. It could be the key to everything.

Had Elliott O'Donnell a better tale than this to tell, he would surely have told it. Had he known anything of the Killer Monk in 1948, he would surely have been on his case. Still, we are talking about an author of too many titles (and of too many ephemerally published ones) for most researchers to hunt down. I would not be totally surprised to learn that the Killer Monk managed to creep into one or two of them; as it is, I can only repeat I have found no sign of him and have to conclude therefore that he came from somewhere else...probably.

Significantly, though, at least two accounts from now-defunct popular magazines point to an episode that may have promoted the "Killer Monk" image. ●5 I have not found this story elsewhere, but knowing how such magazines routinely go to previously published accounts for their material I suspect there exists a much longer version which theirs helped to "feed back" into wider circulation. For certain, the Killer Monk incident enabled these writers to dramatise the fierce and fatal image that Beachy Head evokes for press and public alike.

The story dealt with the climax of an exorcism on Beachy Head in 1953, an event attended by one hundred people who gathered beneath wooden crosses and then illumination provided by the flashing of the lighthouse below. The real drama came when medium Ray de Vekey cried out that he "saw" a "bearded man ... with a flowing robe with a cowl, like a monk ... He is calling us a lot of fools .. Fools, I will sweep you over!" Mr de Vekey began to struggle towards the cliff edge and had to be restrained from going over it. Later he would allege that he had been pulled or lured to this certain destruction by an 'elderly monk with black markings on his habit and his arms and legs in irons'. His consolation was a sure feeling that the evil influence had been driven from the place. Tragically and bathetically, just three weeks later the headland claimed yet another victim.

This incident alone offered to give useful form and substance to the as yet ill-defined and unnamed Horror of Beachy Head. The Monk was a comprehensible personification of evil; he assigned cause to a series of separate acts of self-murder which, inevitably, might otherwise have been self-contained mysteries. The legend's internal logic showed that the

Hunted down mercilessly, shackled and hurled from the cliff, he is now supposed to haunt the Head, malevolently enticing susceptible victims to leap to their deaths

couldn't doubt - but was it really as high as everyone seemed to pretend?

So I rang Eastbourne Police and asked - hesitantly: *was it true* that Beachy Head had or has a larger-than-usual number of suicides? The person at the other end plainly thought she was dealing with a fool. "Yes. A look in the newspapers will tell you that." Not having the leisure to do so in any meaningful depth, I will quote some figures given by a journalist writing in 1976. According to him, Beachy Head averaged ten deaths a year, of which six would be 'clear cases of suicide'; accidental falls, according to the same source, 'are rare', making the former figure a cautious underestimate. ●4

Rising to some six hundred feet at its tallest, Beachy Head might need nothing else to recommend it to would-be suicides. Notwithstanding, the large number has been tentatively blamed on the vengeful spirit of a monk left homeless when his monastery was sacked by Henry VIII's officers. Hunted down mercilessly, shackled and hurled from the cliff, he is now supposed to haunt the Head, malevolently enticing susceptible victims to leap to their deaths.

Just when the Killer Monk stepped forward to provide a supernatural explanation for the Head's deadly



putative Monk had a terrible motive for his actions; through him, the victims had a motive for theirs. It all made sense.

And yet he does not appear to have succeeded in establishing himself as a popular sort of folk-demon. By this I mean that the Killer Monk of Beachy Head never became a widely circulating story. Being unable to find more on it than I have used to write the foregone summary, I asked Jacqueline Simpson whether she had heard this or any other legend of the kind concerning Beachy Head. As a keen and informed student of Sussex folklore (not to mention being authoress of *The Folklore of Sussex*, Batsford 1973) she seemed well placed to comment, the more so as she resides about fifteen miles westward along the coast from the monk-haunted headland.

Dr Simpson replied that she had heard *no* legends of *any* kind of ghost haunting Beachy Head - was unaware of any published reference to such - and added that none of the people to whom she had passed on my enquiry had heard of it, these including an enthusiastic collector of Sussex lore and books as well as a man with a long-standing investigative interest in the paranormal events of that county. Even allowing for the possibility that earlier folklore writers may have shunned placing so unsavoury a subject as suicide before their readers, she was inclined to regard the Killer Monk as a quite recent phenomenon a quite-recently invented story and most likely no older than the de Vekey seance. The possibility that he was essentially invented by Ray de Vekey escaped neither Dr Simpson nor myself.

The Killer Monk of Beachy Head has all the indications of being a modern legend, then, but he cashes in on two antique motifs. The story is one of many exploiting the dramatic possibilities of the Dissolution with its cast of dispossessed monks and abbots. This epic drama has been a resource of folk-narrative for centuries; the Dissolution can be invoked as background for tales of tragedy and violence or more specifically as the rationale for a haunting. Most of all, it explores the belief that the injury and insult inflicted on the Church and its followers at this time would be sternly, strongly avenged. Usually this takes the form of a curse on those who usurp Church property; the new owners of the alienated abbey are prostrated by financial ruin, their children die in tragic accidents, the family line is extinguished *etc.* But here the revenge is more direct and a lot more physical.

In summary: the Killer Monk of Beachy Head is a modern legend whose precise source is unknown to this writer, but one which, on the evidence assembled here, was most likely a promotion of journalists around 1953. This nightmare-figure professes to explain the Head's proven bad record of suicides, constituting itself around popular awareness that the place has such a record and the suspicion that it is sufficiently abnormal to require an abnormal explanation. In structure, it utilises a motif which is *traditional* (the curse of the Dissolution) but also literary - the latter by reference to concepts found in O'Donnell and most notably those relating to the immaterial existence of violent "elementals" whose sole pleasure lies in the destruction of humans. Ultimately, the Monk does not *explain* Beachy Head's record, but testifies to the old credo that suicide is so aberrant an action that it must come about as a result of external and supernatural influences.

We can call him a bit of a failure, too.

Melodramatic as he is, the Killer Monk does not appear to have penetrated Sussex folklore, oral or printed, to any appreciably deep level. I would have little excuse for writing about him were it not for the way he fits into a pattern which traces a narrative trend in the visualisation of suicide.

The Killer Monk is a symbolic expression of what we would like to blame suicide upon. Like the old-time Satan, he is supposed to be an immaterial enemy who operates on a mental level, *tempting* victims to jump off a high place. But he is also a Maniac figure, a disembodied version of what can be found in more contemporary legends which also offer to solve the mystery of why certain places are contaminated by so many suicides. The London Underground, which according to a BBC documentary suffers a couple of reported suicides *each week*, ●6 has or had its own Platform Maniac whose dark doings I described back in the May 1985 issue of *Magonia* and more recently in *Folklore Frontiers*. ●7 The Platform Maniac is not depicted as a ghost or disembodied entity - far from it: he is made all the more horrible for being human (and utterly, psychotically insane). Yet in practical terms he is as insubstantial as a phantom. Even his penchant for shoving victims to their doom beneath oncoming trains is in full conformity with the muscular activities of the ghosts and "elementals" that O'Donnell wrote about. From traditional ghost to modern urban maniac is but a short ... step. (I nearly wrote "jump" there.)

Then I am reminded of *The Golden Gate Murders*, a 1979 movie which has been shown several times on British television. Set around San Francisco's most famous feature (which no one needs reminding is also infamous as one of the world's most popular sites for suicide attempts) the film stars Susannah York as a nun who teams up with a detective to investigate the death of a priest. Like many before him, he is thought to have ended his life by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge; the nun insists that not even the most depressed Catholic priest would commit the deadly sin of suicide. In its unassuming way, the plot explores our reluctance to believe that anyone *could* do such a thing, even if we don't regard suicide as a deadly sin in the heroine's strict Catholic terms. It also airs our suspicion that when a particular place becomes notorious for the numbers who do so, what looks like self-murder is in fact murder by Entity or Entities Unknown.

Susannah York was right, as it turned out. I hope I'll spoil the pleasure of nobody who has yet to see the film if I give away that the priest did *not* jump off the Golden Gate Bridge: like all too many of those who went before him, he was pulled or pushed off. And by a veritable urban maniac who resides in the secret steely recesses of the great structure.

The suicidal were once thought victims of the Devil's temptation. Your modern Maniac is no psychologist and doesn't bother with enticement, suggestion, mesmerism or anything like that. He simply grabs hold and pushes.

4. Anthony Davis (see note following).

5. Anthony Davis. "Curse of Beachy Head", *Titbits*, 29 January-4 February 1976; Paul Grant, "Is Beachy Head Haunted by a Killer Monk?", *Weekend* (no date, but some time in 1975). Any discrepancy in my version is likely to have occurred as a result of combining these two accounts.

6. I quote this figure - which I hope is an average - from a BBC documentary of the London Underground which was shown on 17 May 1989. The interviewee spoke of the investigation of these suicide reports as "a messy job but someone's got to do it".

7. Michael Goss, "The Maniac on the Platform", *Magonia* 19 (May 1985), pages 3-6 and 22; "September 1994: the news isn't very good", *Folklore Frontiers* 23 (October 1994), pages 3-6. The latter was inspired by a report in *The Guardian* (13 September 1994, page 3) of a belligerent and plainly deranged man's attempt to push a woman under a train at London Bridge station. For a more free-ranging study of legendary assailants, see my "The Halifax Slasher and Other 'Urban Maniac' Tales", a paper originally delivered at the Perspectives on Contemporary Legend Conference, Sheffield, 1988 and subsequently published with revisions in *A Nest of Vipers. Perspectives on Contemporary Legend Vol. 5*, edited by Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith (Sheffield Academic Press 1990), pages 89-111.

BACK ISSUES

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Letters

Dear John

Recently I was at the British Newspaper Library looking for articles about a Satanic cat scare. I didn't find it, but pussies were on the agenda nonetheless, as I came across the following in the *South Avon Mercury* on Thursday 31 May 1990:

'Beware of catnappers

Petowners in Portishead were this week warned to be more vigilant after claims that more than a dozen cats have fallen victim to catnappers.

Widow Iris Stoa, of Portland Way, alleges the cats were being stolen by a national organisation, which sells their pelts on the black market in West Germany and Italy, as revealed by the *Sunday Express* last weekend.

Mrs Stoa also believes it is possible the cats are being sold to laboratories for medical research.

"I know a number of people whose cats have mysteriously disappeared. They phone the local vets to see if they have been reported killed on the road but the vets haven't heard a thing," said Mrs Stoa, committee member on Portishead Residents' Association.

"I appeal to people that if they go out, get your cats inside. There is a known group stealing these cats and then selling them off."

Mrs Stoa said a Pet Watch scheme had already been started up in Yorkshire to combat the catnappers.

The head office of Pet Watch has been forced to shut down because of threats from the catnappers.

The animal-lover said she would like other petowners to set up a similar Pet Watch scheme in Portishead, but added that she was unable to help because she is

shortly moving out of the area.'

I will try and check out the *Sunday Express* article sometime. Presumably it set off a number of these scares. The "threats from the catnappers" sound vaguely implausible, like all those people who get threats from non-existent Satanists.

Yet another cat scare: I copied the following item from the Index to the *New York Times*.

'Cat mutilation deaths in Tustin, California, alarm pet owners; 67 victims have been found in last three months alone, some of them cut in half with what some say is almost surgical precision, others disemboweled or skinned... pet owners, galvanised by recent reports of ritualistic animal mutilations in California, Florida and other states, say all signs point to something very unnatural, possibly satanic cult or youth gangs at work; however, animal control and sheriff's officers, after autopsies on dozens of cats and consultation with Federal wildlife expert, say most likely culprits are urbanized coyotes.'

The real trouble seems to be that cats are such lovable creatures that when one goes astray the owner's imagination works overtime. Mrs Stoa made the parallel claim that they are stolen for vivisection. I remember seeing advertising posters warning of that danger back in the 1960s, but surely vivisectionists could breed their own cats or buy them legitimately?

As for the Satanic cat scare I mentioned at the beginning, I haven't been able to find the details, but the outline of the story, as it was told in *Pagan News* a few years back, is thus: in early 1990 a burned body of a cat was found on a beach at Clevedon. An RSPCA expert declared that it had been sacrificed in a Satanic ritual. A

teenage girl then accused a group of youths from a nearby school of being the Satanists responsible. However, it seems that in court she admitted to making the story up, and that it finally turned out that the cat had been the pet of an old lady, had died of natural causes, and its owner decided to give it a sort of Viking funeral.

Best wishes,

Gareth J. Medway, London SW7

Dear Editor,

It was so reassuring to be told by Martin Kottmeyer that although the Gill case is "an impressive anomaly", it is "of course not impressive enough to make me believe in visiting extraterrestrials". After all, we would not want the armchair readers of *Magonia* to be disturbed in their complacent view that everything can be explained by recourse to the social sciences and folklore.

But my confidence in Kottmeyer faltered when I saw that although he mentions Cruttwell twice he does not seem to have consulted the Rev. Norman Cruttwell's exhaustive investigation of the Papua and New Guinea sightings of 1958 - 59, for if he had he would have realised that the Gill sightings of the 26th and 27th June were but two of over seventy reported UFOs during the wave, which ranged from lights in the sky to seemingly structured solid objects.

It would be disappointing if *Magonia* were to be no different from all those other UFO magazines busy bolstering up the belief systems of 'New Agers', abductees, etc. all too willing to be economical with the facts when they don't suit the dogma.

I am still convinced that despite our growing sophistication concerning earth-

lights, altered mental states, psychosocial forces etc., there is still a signal behind the noise that says that the most convincing explanation for the Gill case is that they all saw *exactly* what they said they saw up there.

In case anyone is interested the Rev. Crutwell's report was printed in full in *Flying Saucer Review* special issue number 4, published August 1971.

Yours sincerely, Michael Buhler,
London E1.

Dear Sir,

I read with great interest Martin Kottmeyer's article about the sightings of Father Gill of Papua New Guinea (*Magonia* 54). Let me bring forward some comments.

The elevation of the phenomenon is perhaps the major pitfall of the boat hypothesis. Note that Father Gill stated the following: "Venus was in its proper place, and then *further up, more or less overhead*, was another Venus" (Basterfield, p.21). By the way, another mention can be found in the text omitted in one of Kottmeyer's quotations (paragraph taken from reference 17 in *Magonia*, page 13). the missing fragment reads "Well, why not wave to people up there? So we did."

Concerning the location of Giwa and Boianai, I am not sure that Kottmeyer has it right for I have seen these places located differently in other articles. Is there a *Magonia* reader with good enough cartography as to settle the matter? [Editor's comment: The map on page 12 of *Magonia* 54 was taken from the *Readers' Digest World Atlas*]

Finally it would be interesting to take a closer look at the details of the drawings and the circumstances in which they were made. We are told that the witnesses did the sketches independently. But why are the drawings of Rarata and Guyorobo so similar? And what about the way the witnesses choose to represent the upper shaft of light so conventionally with a broken line?

Has it any relevance that the object depicted by Father Gill is literally a 'flying saucer' while the sketches of Rarata and Guyorobo seem to be more akin to the spaceship of Adamski? By the way, is there any clue as to what the three rods on top of Rarata's and Guyorobo's drawings mean? Light rays? People? Aerials?

Yours faithfully, Manuel Borraz Aymerich,
L'Hospitalet, Barcelona

Dear John

Martin Kottmeyer's articles are usually watertight, but his explanation of the Father Gill sighting as a boat at sea springs too many leaks to float:

1. The UFO of June 27 was an all-terrain vehicle, crossing both land and sea. Though most descriptions are unclear, Rev. Gill said in a talk, four months after the event that the object "wandered over the sky a bit", passed behind a hill, came back, then "shot right across the bay" (Keith Basterfield, *An indepth review of Australasian UFO related entity reports* p.27). Allan Hendry's illustration (*UFO Handbook* p.274) approved by Rev. Gill, shows the UFO over land during the waving incident.

2. Even assuming gross error and the 'UFO' really was a boat, it had to lie close to shore. Gill's distance estimate of 300-400 feet suits the proportions of the beings in his illustration, if they are of average height, and a location in the northwest or west assures that the boat stayed close to the westward-running shoreline. The sea is not a lake and seldom becomes mirror-smooth. A boat near to shore would have breakers and the unsettled weather of a night with intermittent rain to spoil the illusion of doubling or a false horizon.

3. Why would a squid-fishing boat work the shallow waters of a bay, if the purpose of the bright lights is to lure squid from the depths?

4. The most important point is that the UFOs were clearly seen in the sky. Gill describes the craft appearing above Venus, and Hendry (p.134) cites a 45-degree angle of elevation during the waving episode. Even allowing for a great deal of error in angle estimates, the witnesses would have to be remarkably disoriented to mistake a horizontal for an elevated line of sight. On the 27th it was not even dark, and given a background of shore and mountains two miles away to the west, opportunities for disorientation were minimal. The witnesses knew they were looking up.

Too many irreconcilable facts scuttle the boat theory.

Thomas E. Bullard,
Bloomington, Indiana

Dear Sir

Despite my long-standing admiration for Martin Kottmeyer, I must challenge his inadequate characterisation of my views on the Rev. Gill New Guinea UFO case of 1959 in his article in your November issue. According to Kottmeyer, "Klass suggested it was a hoax". A more accurate characterization, as detailed in my book *UFOs explained* is that I believe the incident was a practical joke that went astray.

Gill's associate, Reverend Norman Crutwell had become very interested in UFOs and had been named an official UFO observer in New Guinea for *Flying Saucer Review*. Crutwell asked his other

missionary associates in New Guinea to assist by reporting local UFO sightings and many did so promptly. But it was almost six months before Gill reported his first UFO sighting to Crutwell, who gently chided Gill for not being more attentive.

On the night of June 26, 1959, Gill reported sighting a bright light in the sky around 6:45 p.m. and he reported that he and some natives spent *more than four hours* observing this UFO and what appeared to be human-like creatures atop it. The next night around 6 p.m., the natives alerted Gill that the UFO had returned and he joined them on the beach. As Gill later reported to Crutwell, they could see human-like figures on the UFO. Gill reported that when he waved at one of the creatures, "the figure did the same". Soon the UFO appeared to be approaching the shore, as if it were going to land.

What an exciting moment that must have been - perhaps Gill and his native friends would be the first Earthlings to shake hands with extraterrestrials! But then, according to Gill, "at 6:30 p.m., I went to dinner". ETs could wait, the 'inner man' needed to be fed. At 7 p.m. Gill returned to the beach, but now the UFO had moved away and so he departed for church services.

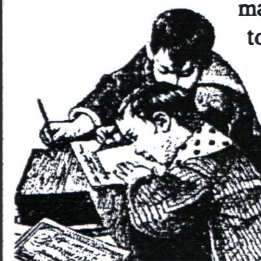
Gill reporting these exciting events to Crutwell in a letter that began: "Dear Norman: Here is a lot of material - the kind you have been waiting for, no doubt; but I am in some ways sorry that it has to be me who supplies it. Attitudes at Dogura in respect of my sanity vary greatly, and like all mad men, I myself think my grey cells are O.K...."

It is my view that Gill was pulling Crutwell's leg, and never suspected that Crutwell would take his fantastic (for the 1959 era) tale seriously. Once Crutwell had publicized Gill's story, it would be awkward for Gill to admit that he never dreamed that his associate would be so credulous. I do not believe that Gill intentionally created a hoax tale to try to embarrass his good friend and associate.

Sincerely

Philip J. Klass,
Washington, D.C.

Magonia welcomes letters in response to articles in the magazine, or any topic of interest to our readers. Please send them to the editorial address on page 2.



book reviews

Albert Budden. *UFOs: Psychic Close Encounters*. Blandford, 1995. £9.99

You know that feeling you get at a UFO conference, or in the pub afterwards when you're talking to someone and for the first ten minutes you are convinced that they are an interesting and intelligent person making a number of cogent points; then after about twenty minutes you get the vague feeling that there's something not quite right here, and after half an hour, as the saying goes, "in your guts you know he's nuts"? That's something like reading this book.

Budden does indeed make interesting points and presents intriguing cases. There is nothing particularly outrageous in the notion that certain people may be unusually sensitive to electromagnetic fields which might induce epileptiform episodes or other neurological disturbances, and as a result might experience anomalous perceptions. Had Budden stayed there we would have a rational and testable hypothesis which might account for a portion of UFO and other visionary episodes.

Testable, but likely to fail the test, for if visionary experience is related to electromagnetic pollution, then the evidence of visionary experience should be constantly increasing as electromagnetic pollution increases, from a zero point sometime before the nineteenth century. Of course this is not true. Although the cultural colouring of the experiences change the general evidence remains fairly constant, or even to have fallen. Other scholars, unaware of the continuous evidence of visionary experience, have suggested environmental causes for a supposed larger number of such experiences in the middle ages, for example

ergot poisoning from contaminated bread.

However, all this is rather academic, for Budden simply does not stop at this superficially reasonable explanation, but serves up a chaotic pot-pourri of science, speculative, science and downright pseudo-science. Though he evokes the terms 'allergy' and 'electromagnetic fields', he ascribes to both origins and properties far from those acknowledged by mainstream science. Thus EM fields are invoked to explain ghosts, poltergeists, dowsing, ESP and psychokinesis.

The notion that there are groups of 'electromagnetic sensitives' who react in extraordinary ways in the presence of EM fields, does not appear to have been subjected to any rigorous scientific testing, and 'EM sensitivity' may be a socially constructed disorder such as Mesmer's 'mesmeric trance' or Charcot's 'hysteria'. Indeed the whole idea appears to be a modern version of the theory of magnetic sensitivity proposed by Baron Karl von Reichenbach in the 1850's: Budden's 'electromagnetic field' seems to have more in common with Reichenbach's 'Odic Force' than modern understanding of electromagnetism.

Budden is a disciple of a doctrine



known as 'environmental medicine' which sounds very scientific but has many of the properties of a therapeutic cult: charismatic leaders, claims of omnibus solutions, etc. The two main promoters in the United Kingdom were Drs. Keith Munby and Jean Munro who evolved the notion of 'total allergy syndrome', ascribing all life's ills to allergic reactions to just about everything associated with modern life, and advocating a return to Stone Age diets and spartan living conditions. The best known sufferer from Total Allergy Syndrome was a former member of the pop group Pickettywitch whose plight was regularly featured on TV programmes.

At the height of its popularity TAS was seen as the root cause of virtually all human distress and it evoked a powerful symbolism - the corruption of decadent modern times may be overcome by a return to spartan simplicity. There were obvious resonances with some of the deeper shades of Greenery. As the 80's progressed TAS in large part mutated into ME and as Munby and Munro parted company with mainstream medicine it is clear that their ideas became more - how shall I put it - unorthodox. From some literature quoted by Budden they seem indistinguishable from the radiaesthesia and little black boxes of a previous era. The catchword was 'electromagnetic' (but not as we know it Captain). Some supporters went further: Michael Shallus argued that electricity was dangerously artificial and intrinsically evil, indeed that it was an emanation of the devil, and computers were the Anti-Christ.

And that funny feeling in the tummy? It finally came on page 75, when Budden suggests that the 'crashed saucer' at Roswell has been assembled by psychokinesis.

Peter Rogerson

Louis Franzini and John M. Grossberg. *Eccentric and Bizarre Behaviours*. Wiley, 1995. \$16.95.

A brief overview of a range of strange behavioural disorders ranging from 'auto-erotic asphyxia' - sexual stimulation by strangling oneself, with or without a satsuma in the mouth, as practised by some Members of Parliament - to trichotilomania or compulsive hair-pulling. A number of these will be of interest to *Magonia* readers. We have discussed before the extremes of Munchausen's Syndrome and Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy. The account given here is brief but underlines the remarkable lengths that MHS and MHSP personalities go to to draw attention to themselves, including physical mutilation, self-poisoning and attacks on children and others. These case histories should prevent us ever taking at face value the bland statements that we hear in connection with the abduction phenomenon that such-and-such an abductee "had nothing to gain" by telling and reliving a story of personal terror.

Another chapter looks at 'Capgrass Delusion' in which the sufferers become convinced that people close to them have been replaced by identical-looking imposters who are engaged in a conspiracy against them.

Some of the behaviour patterns discussed are closer to rumour-panics than individual psychopathology. The remarkable koro syndrome, in which men are possessed with fear that their penises are shrinking into their bodies seems to be a social phenomenon in some south-east Asian cultures. It perhaps provides a model for other culturally-bound behavioural anomalies such as the abduction syndrome in Western, largely English-speaking, societies.

The 'Stockholm Syndrome', in which people held by a group of bank-robbers eventually came to sympathise with and support their captors, perhaps also provides a model for the curious way in which the apparent terrors of the abduction phenomenon are increasingly being written about as a 'positive' and 'transformative' experience.

This book is intended for the general reader, and the topics are presented fairly superficially; occasionally the tone is perhaps rather flippant for the dark subjects being discussed - vampirism and necrophilia for instance - but it provides some insight into the strange patterns of behaviour that can afflict people who is other respects are totally 'normal'. As the say in the home of *UFO Magazine* "there's nowt so queer as folk!"

John Rimmer

Hans Sebald. *Witch Children; from Salem witch-hunts to modern courtrooms*. Prometheus, 1995.

Until very recently academics were likely to remark that the last writer to express a belief in Witchcraft was Richard Boulton in 1715, failing to notice the modern spate of books by vicars saying that witches make pacts with Satan. It is therefore refreshing that Sebald, a professor of sociology at Arizona University, draws parallels between modern stories of Satanism, such as those told in the McMartin child abuse case, and the witch-craze. In Mora, Sweden, in 1669, for example, there were mass trials in which children stated that the devil would carry them through the air to the Blockulla, a sort of fairy-tale realm where he had sex with them, and encouraged them to have sex with each other, as a result of which they gave birth to frogs and snakes. Confessions like this should be required reading for those who today maintain that "children never lie about abuse".

Sebald's book is based around one particular case, from Bamberg in Germany, in 1629. Due to a rule granting anonymity in the records to those who confessed freely, the name of the boy concerned is not known, so Sebald calls him 'Witchboy'. He made elaborate confessions to the Inquisition, saying that he and other boys had worshipped the devil, flown through

the air on metal pitchforks, turned themselves into mice, laid curses on crops and cattle, and so on. Sebald speculates - he admits he cannot be certain - on the true background to all this. Partly it was based on what the inquisitors wanted to hear, perhaps mixed up with real memories of pranks committed by a gang of boys he had belonged to. He also suggests that, since belief in Witchcraft was then universal, they may have actually tried to practise it.

At one point his interrogators demanded to know what special prayer Witchboy had been taught by the devil. He kept hesitating, and the scribe declared that it was 'obvious' that the demon was telling him to keep quiet and not give further information away. One can fairly suppose that in fact he was wondering what to say, since in reality he knew no such prayer. In a subsequent session he recited what seems to have been a nursery rhyme with the words "in the devil's name" added, and this satisfied them. This is similar to modern child therapists who hear children recite rude versions of nursery rhymes, and conclude they were taught them at Satanic rituals.

"When children today talk about Satanic ritual, they enjoy almost as much credibility as during the classic era of the witch-hunt." Sebald concludes that but for the separation of church and state the modern persecutions would be far more severe.

Gareth Medway

James Hayward. *Shingle Street: flame, chemical and psychological warfare in 1940 and the nazi invasion that never was*. Les Temps Modernes, 1994. £6.95

The Suffolk hamlet of Shingle Street lies just a few miles from the notorious Bentwaters AF base and Rendlesham Forest. It was evacuated for military use in World War II. After the war various legends grew about some 'event' during the war: that Allied soldiers had been killed in a friendly-fire incident in 1943-44, or it was the scene of an attempted Nazi invasion in 1940.

The common theme of the stories is buried bodies, and the story merges into a larger rumour of a failed German invasion of September 1940 which was foiled by the British "setting the sea on fire". There were rumours of hundreds or thousands of burned bodies, and even 'eyewitness' accounts such as that by the journalist William Shirer who claimed to have encountered a Red Cross train and seen

soldiers with burns, although no evidence has ever been brought out to substantiate these rumours.

When a piece suggesting the 'friendly-fire' incident appeared in the *East Anglian Daily Times* in March 1992 it set off a series of reports and alleged eyewitness testimony which bears a close similarity to Roswell rumours of secret government files, which when released contained nothing of interest, thus prompting stories of files removed, deathbed testimony, undertakers tales, and even an MIB ringing up an investigator and warning him off further probing.

A few years ago I suggested to my *Magonia* colleagues that one way of testing claims of extraordinary historical mysteries was to present a fake TV documentary alleging that the Germans had invaded and occupied a small isolated area of East Anglia during the war, and wait for 'eyewitnesses' to come out of the woodwork. The Shingle Street story suggest that their numbers would not have been negligible.

Peter Rogerson

Paul Deveraux. *Secrets of Ancient and Sacred Places*. Blandford, 1995. £11.99

The sites described in this book are taken from the UNESCO World Heritage list of sites chosen for their cultural interest, their natural features, or both. For each of the sites we are given summaries of the facts discovered by archaeologists, together with discussions on aspects of interest to students of Earth Mysteries.

Much attention is given to the alignments which have been discovered at many of the sites. Although a few of these may be accidental, most are obviously not. Such lines often converge on a site of ritual significance known as an omphalos (from the Greek word for navel). Some of these lines are roads, while others are markings on the ground, or alignments of buildings, stone circles, or other structures. Devereux shows how such alignments have dictated the street layouts of some towns including Speyer and Karlsruhe in Germany.

As we would expect from this author there are stories of mysterious lights seen at some of these places, including Hessdalen in Norway, which was the subject of much discussion in UFO circles in the 1980s. One of the most interesting accounts of mysterious lights comes from Mount Taishan, China, where there are about 300 temples, mostly Buddhist. According to the English Buddhist John Blofeld, who visited the mountain in the late 1930's, there is a temple associated with a nearby tower on a high peak, from which he and others witnessed mysterious floating orange spheres of light. These lights appear between midnight and two in the morning and the tower is said to have been specifically built to observe them. However, before making any comments it would be nice to have some independent confirmation of this intriguing story.

The book is profusely illustrated and attractively presented. It has been artfully written to have a wide appeal. References are given for readers who wish to obtain further information on the topics raised.

John Harney

Philip Heselton. *Earth Mysteries*. Element, 1995. £9.99

Philip Heselton is one of the doyens of EM research in Britain and co-founder of *Ley Hunter* magazine in the 1960's. In this volume he presents an overview of the range of earth mysteries, starting with a history of the development of the idea of leys, and moving on to topics such as terrestrial zodiacs, mazes and feng-shui. He is particularly concerned with folklore con-

nections to EM sites.

Much of the thesis of the book is dependent on the presumed reality of earth energies, subtle and rather ill-defined forces which suffuse the planet and are tracked by man-made markings and contructions, or naturally occurring features; or are tapped by performing rituals at auspicious places and times. One may doubt the existence of a single 'world wide web' of energies, while recognising that more established energies such as piezo-electricity and the energies associated with seismic activity may have many, little understood, effects.

The book emphasises the supposed spiritual manifestations of earth mysteries, and this puts it rather out of phase with some recent developments in the field. Researchers in the group around today's *Ley Hunter* for instance are looking at the topic in a more scientifically oriented manner, placing emphasis on instrumented readings and recordings; a development which has been met with dismay by some EM researchers. In this book Heselton is anxious to express this side of the topic whilst not, I suspect, fully favouring it.

In all an excellently presented and beautifully illustrated introduction to a fascinating if contentious subject, and gets a resounding cheer from this reviewer for not once mentioning crop circles!

John Rimmer

Tom McHugh. *Flying Saucers are Everywhere*. Prometheus, 1996. £9.99.

It's always a risk to proclaim something the worst UFO book ever - the competition is so strong but I'll take a chance with this. Billed on the back as a "zany" look at the UFO phenomenon it can only be amusing to those who think that inventing fictional characters with names like Betty Bumpkin and Dr Kopfkummer puts you in the Oscar Wilde class of sophisticated wit.

A pretend history of ufology, it takes a shot at every easy target (except the sceptics of course; this is, incredibly, a Prometheus book) and comprehensively misses the lot. Heaven knows, there is a hilarious book to be written about ufology, using nothing more than the published words of researchers and witnesses; and there are plenty of unintentionally funny books around, each one of which knocks the spots off this as a giggle-fest. It is absolutely baffling how a publisher like Prometheus, who I have a lot of respect for, can produce such a pathetic, lame-brained waste of time, money and paper as this sad collection of hopeless, humorless twaddle. (Come off the fence Rimmer, did you like the book or not?)

John Rimmer

25 years ago

Throughout 1970 the debate on 'New Ufology' continued in the pages of MUFOB. The long awaited publication of John Keel's *Operation Trojan Horse* was marked by a favourable review in the September 1970 issue. In November 1970 one of MUFOB's strictly scientific articles appeared, by Liverpool amateur astronomer and photographer Rob Halliday describing way of enhancing photographs of astronomical subjects - including possible UFOs - by extended development techniques. This was an investigative tool which would be of great value to serious research. Naturally, no-one in ufology even seemed to notice its existence.

1970 ended with another of our great set-piece articles: my article 'The UFO is alive and well and living in fairyland', announced by an elaborate pseudo-art nouveau cover which produced a reaction from one reader rather out of proportion to its artistic value. This article was MUFOB's clearest commitment yet to the 'fairies and folklore' approach to ufology associated with Jacques Vallée. Another piece in the same issue, 'Of hoaxes and hoaxers' by former MUFORG stalwart Paul Hopkins, was little commented on at the time, but set a time-bomb ticking away which exploded many years later. Wait and see!

The first issue of 1971 was a slim one, a mere eight pages, but it is the one we re-read with the most pleasure these many years later, for it contained the famous 'Fred O. Gardner letter'. Fred was outraged by MUFOB and our sceptical attitude, but seemed even more outraged by my cover drawing for the 'Fairyland' piece - or as he described it a "way-out drawing and all the rest of the hot stuff". It contained the sentence which I think best sums up the attitude of a particular kind of pompous ufologist: "I think the fact that I have three grown up children, all with university status, the eldest holding three degrees, and five grandchildren to date, plus a varied and active career in this country and abroad (including 12 years work in Central Africa teaching through three Bantu languages) mand am now striding into my 63rd year and currently employed by the British Leyland Motor Corporation, the largest of its kind in Europe, may justify my claim to be realistic."

Well, we all know what happened to British ~~Leyland~~, don't we.